

# THE BUNNY STORIES.\*

FOR LITTLE READERS.

## COUSIN JACK'S STORY.

BY JOHN H. JEWETT.



HE Bunnies had planned a chestnutting party for their Saturday holiday.

It was early in October and there had been a few sharp frosts to open the chestnut-burrs.

The glossy brown nuts were just peeping from their snug quarters, like tiny birds in a nest, and looked very tempting in their pale green and gold setting among the fading and falling leaves.

Every season brought its own pleasures for the Bunnies, from their first search for pussy-willows and arbutus in the spring, through all the changing months of flowers and fruits and summer picnics, to the gathering of the bright-colored autumn leaves, and the nutting parties; then came the coasting and skating, and the long winter evenings for reading and story-telling, until spring came again.

Next to a picnic, the Bunnies enjoyed a nutting party, for, besides the fun, it seemed like a pleasant way of saying good-bye to the woods and the hedges, before they laid aside their beautiful leafy robes, and the winter came to bring them their snowy gowns for a long winter's sleep.

The Bunnies had waited a long time for the chestnuts to ripen, and for nearly a week they had been impatiently counting the days until Saturday should come round to give them a holiday from school.

When the longed-for day came at last, they woke in the morning to find the rain falling steadily, and they felt almost like crying over their disappointment.

Cousin Jack said it might clear off by noon; but, in spite of their hoping and watching, the clouds thickened and the wind blew in fitful gusts, beating the pretty leaves from the trees, and making everything out-of-doors seem gloomy and uncomfortable.

When they heard the Deacon say it was "prob-

ably the Line-storm and might last a week," the Bunnies grumbled and said it was too bad to have their fun spoiled after waiting so long.

Cousin Jack saw their glum faces and said cheerily, "Well, well, I think we can bear the storm, if the poor birds and other shelterless creatures can; and I never heard of their scolding about the weather. Besides," he added, "this storm is saving us trouble."

Bunnyboy asked if he did not mean making trouble instead of saving it, and Cousin Jack replied, "I mean *saving* us trouble, for the best time to go chestnutting is after a hard storm, when the wind and rain have beaten off the nuts, and saved the trouble and risk of clubbing the trees or climbing them to knock off the opening burrs. We shall probably get there as soon as anybody," he added, "and find rare picking when we do."

This made the Bunnies a little more cheerful; and later in the day, when, tired of reading and playing games, they found Cousin Jack in a cosy corner in the library, they began to coax him for a story.

Cousin Jack was never happier than at such times, when, with Cuddledown on his knee, and the other Bunnies gathered around him, he would say, "Well, well, I will put on my thinking-cap and see what will come."

Cuddledown wished for a new story about the "good fairies," but Bunnyboy said he did not believe there were any real fairies, and asked Cousin Jack if he had ever seen any.

Cousin Jack said there were different kinds of fairies, but the only kind he had ever seen were what Bunnyboy called "real fairies," and he had known several in his life.

"Please tell us about the ones you have really seen," said Brownie.

Cousin Jack replied, "I will try to do so, but you must remember that my fairies are real, every-day fairies, and not the story-book kind who are supposed to do impossible things and live in a fairy-land, instead of an every-day, rain or shine, world like ours."

Pinkeyes moved a little nearer to him and asked,

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"Is it wrong to like the story-book fairies? They always seem to be trying to help those who are in trouble, and they make me wish to be like them."

Cousin Jack gave her a very tender glance as he answered, "No harm at all, my dear, and I am glad you asked, for I did not mean to say anything against any kind of good influences which make us wish to be kinder or more thoughtful of others."

"I meant," said he, "only that I had met with some real, helpful fairies who live in the same world we live in, and," he added, with a smile, "I am sitting very near one of that kind now."

Brownie looked up and quickly said, "Oh, you mean Pinkeyes; but she is no fairy at all; she is only the best sister in all the world. Please begin the story!"

"Well, once upon a time —" said Cousin Jack.

"Oh, skip that back number," interrupted Bunnyboy, who was just beginning to use slang phrases and thought it knowing instead of vulgar.

"Well, what if it is?" asked Cousin Jack, good-naturedly. "Who knows how this story begins, if I do not?"

Bunnyboy said, "I beg your pardon, but could you please begin at the real interesting part of the story and save time? I am tired of these opening chapters."

"I do not blame you," said Cousin Jack; "life is short and youth is impatient; let me begin again."

"Many years ago," he continued, "there was a harum-scarum young Bunny, whose story-name we will call Rab.

"Rab was an orphan; at least he thought he was, for the family with whom he lived told him his father and mother had died of a terrible fever in the South, when he was only three or four years old.

"Sometimes, at night, when Rab was lying awake, alone in the dark, he used to fancy he could remember living in another home very different from the place in which he now lived. The neighbors called his present home the 'Poor Farm.'

"Then there seemed to have been some one whom he called 'Papa,' who brought Rab toys and playthings, and carried him up and down stairs on his back, playing horse and rider.

"At such times he thought he could still remember the sweet face and gentle voice of some one who was always near him,—the first in the morning and the last at night to kiss him and call him her 'precious child.'

"Many a night when these fancies came into his mind, they made him feel so lonely and homesick that he would cry until he fell asleep and dream that he had found both father and mother again and was the happiest Bunny in the world.

"But in the morning when he woke up, all about him was so different from his dreams that they seemed as strange and far away as the stars that had gone with the night.

"In the daytime he was so busy doing odd jobs, running on errands, or getting into some new mischief, that he forgot all about any other troubles but his present ones.

"Rab was active and restless, and was almost sure to get into some kind of trouble if the day was long enough.

"If he was sent to rake up the yard and burn the rubbish, he built the bonfire so near the house or stables that when the wind changed, as it usually did, he had to call for help to put out the fire.



RAB DUCKS THE WRONG HEN.

"If he was sent to hunt for hens' nests in the barn, he often tore his clothes by clambering into some out-of-the-way place un-

der the roof to play at having a house of his own, or to carry out some other queer notion that came into his head.

"When he was told he might duck a certain hen in the trough, to break her of setting, he usually ducked the wrong hen, or fell into the water himself in his eagerness. The master of the farm used to say he would almost rather have a hurricane on the place once a week than to have that harum-scarum Rab try to do anything useful.

"Rab used to think that scolding or fault-finding was a way some persons chose to enjoy themselves, and that grumbling was so easy that almost any one could do it and hardly make an effort; and so he kept out of the way as much as possible.

"One day, Rab found a place where a hen had made her nest in the dry grass, under some bushes, quite a long way from the barn.

"There was only one egg in the nest, and, as Rab was not sure it was a good one, he left it there and waited until the next day.

"When he went again to look there was another egg in the nest, and as no one else knew about it, and because he thought it would be fun to keep the hen's secret with her, he said nothing, but watched from day to day until there were six large, white eggs in the nest.

"Rab knew that Peddler Coon, who came

through the town with his cracker-cart every week, often took eggs from the neighbors in exchange for his crackers and cookies.

"Rab liked sweet cakes as well as any other Bunny, but he rarely had a taste of any cakes or cookies at the farm.

"He knew how good Peddler Coon's cookies tasted, for he had seen Rey Fox, and his sister Silva, buy them with pennies, and once Silva had given him some of hers.

"Every time he looked at the nest, he thought of Peddler Coon's cookies, and wondered how many he could buy with an egg. At first he only wished that the eggs belonged to him, and that he could buy cookies with them.

"Then he began to wonder if any one would know if he should take one or two of them. Something in his heart kept whispering, 'It is wrong—they are not yours—you must not take them,' but at last he thought so much about the cookies that it seemed as if he must have some. The only way to get them was to rob the nest.

"He made it seem easier to himself by saying he would take only one, and that the hen would lay another the next day, and no one would know.

"The next time he heard Peddler Coon's horn in the street he waited for an opportunity, and stealing quietly to the nest in the bushes he took an egg, and, hiding it carefully in his jacket-pocket, he ran off down street, out of sight from



RAB STEALS AN EGG.

the house, to wait for the cart to come.

"Rab felt guilty, and it seemed to him as if every one was watching him. This uncomfortable thought made him so excited that he forgot to look carefully before him as he ran.

"On turning a corner, and trying to look over his shoulder at the same time, to see whether the cart was coming, he tripped and fell flat upon the ground.

"The egg, which was still in his pocket, was crushed into a shapeless mass, and Rab knew his chance for cookies was gone, and that he was in difficulties besides.

"In trying to get the broken egg from his pocket, he smeared his hands and jacket; and the more he tried the more the egg-stain spread, until

it looked as if he had been trying to paint a golden sunset on one side of his jacket.

"What to do next, puzzled him. His first thought was to go back and try to explain the accident by telling a lie about how the egg came in his pocket.

"Rab never had told a lie in his life, but it now seemed to him that, having begun by stealing the egg, the easiest way out of the scrape was to lie.

"The more he thought about it, the harder the case seemed to grow. He wondered whether the master would believe his story if he made up one. If he did not believe it, would he flog him until he owned to the truth, and then flog him again for both stealing and lying?

"Then he began to pity himself, and to wish that he had a father or mother to help him out of his trouble.

"This made him wonder what they would think of their little Rab, if they were alive, and knew he was beginning to steal and tell lies, and the shame of it almost broke his heart.

"He crept behind a stone wall, out of sight, and lay down to have a good cry before deciding what to do."

"Where does the fairy come in? Is n't it almost time for one?" asked Brown, with his eyes full of sympathy for Rab.

"Yes," replied Cousin Jack, "the fairy was just coming that way, and she was one of the sweetest little fairies you ever heard of, in or out of a story-book.

"She was a graceful young fairy, with a gentle face and large, tender, brown eyes, very much like your Mother Bunny's.

"As she was passing, she heard some one sobbing behind the low wall, and, stopping to look over the wall, she saw poor Rab lying there with the hot tears streaming down his face.

"What is the matter, little Bunny; why are you hiding there and crying so bitterly?" asked the fairy.

"Rab brushed the tears away with the sleeve of his jacket, and replied, 'Because I am unhappy; please go away!'

"Reaching out her hand to him, the fairy said, 'That is a good reason why I should not go away, and leave you alone. If you are unhappy you must be in trouble, so please get up and tell me about it, and let me try to comfort you.'

"The fairy's manner was so kind and friendly that Rab thanked her, and, getting up from the ground, he said, 'You are very kind, but you do not know what I have done. I ought to go back to the farm and be flogged, instead of being comforted by you, and I will go now.'

"Oh! do not say that," said the fairy. 'If

your trouble is so bad, you must come home with me and see my mother. She will help you if any one can.'

"Rab looked at his soiled jacket, and blushed as he said, 'Oh, no! I am ashamed to be seen, or to speak to any one.'

"'But you need not be afraid of my mother,' replied the fairy; 'she knows just what every one

would soon have the stains washed off and they would have a little talk while the jacket was drying.

"'It is n't the jacket that troubles me,' said Rab, 'it is ever so much worse than egg-stains.'

"Then he bravely tried to hold back his tears while he told her the whole truth, from the day he first found the nest to his taking the egg, the accident which followed, and even about his first plan of telling a lie to save himself from being found out.

"There were tears in Mother Deer's eyes as she said to him, 'I am sorry for you, Rab, but it might be worse, and I am glad you came to me.'

"'It is hard for a little Bunny, like you, to begin life all alone, without a kind father or mother to watch over you, and I only wonder how such little homeless waifs do as well as you do.'

"'I have known many homes,' Mother Deer continued, 'where everything that love and patience could do was done for the little ones, and in spite of it all they would go astray and grieve everybody by their waywardness and wrong-doing.'

"Rab hid his face in her lap and cried softly, but Mother Deer took his hand in hers and said cheerfully, 'You must not be discouraged; you have done wrong; but you can do right about it, and I am sure you will, for you have been brave and honest to tell me the truth, and have not tried to spare yourself as many might have done.'

"'Now, I will tell you what we will do. I will write a note to the master of the farm and tell him what I think of a Bunny who wishes to do right, and you must go to him and tell the whole story, just as you have told it to me.'

"'Whatever he may think best to do about it, you must bear as bravely as you can, for that is your part of the matter.'

"'It is not always easy,' Mother Deer went on, 'to be brave when one is right; but it takes more nerve and real courage to be brave and truthful when we know we are in the wrong.'

"Rab looked up into her kind face and said, 'No one ever talked so to me before, and I will do just what you have told me to do, no matter what comes. I am not afraid of a flogging, now, if you will only think I do not mean to be bad any more.'

"Mother Deer kissed him and said, 'You may be sure I will, Rab,' and just then Hazel came in with the jacket, clean and dry, and a big bunch of grapes which she had saved for him.

"Hazel walked part of the way with him, as he went back to the farm, and when she bade him good-night, Rab said, 'You and your mother must be my good fairies, for no one else ever helped me out of my troubles as you have done.'

"Then Rab went directly to the master and told him all about finding the nest and what had



HAZEL FAWN FINDS RAB.

needs who is in trouble, so come with me and I will help you clean your jacket, and mother will tell you what is best to do.'

"Taking his hand, she urged him gently, and, almost in spite of himself, Rab yielded and went with her.

"On the way the fairy told him her name was Hazel Fawn, and that she lived in the Deer Cottage with her mother, Mrs. Deer.

"She did not ask him any questions, but when they reached the cottage she said simply to her mother, 'Here 's a little Bunny who is in trouble. I thought you could help him if he would tell you about it, while I am cleaning his jacket.'

"Mother Deer said kindly; 'I am glad to see you, Rab, for I have heard about you, and know where you live. You must trust me as you would your own mother, and let me help you just as she would wish to, if she were here.'

"Then she showed him where he could wash the egg-stains from his hands, and helped him take off his jacket.

"Hazel took the jacket and left the room, without waiting to hear what Rab should tell her mother, because she thought he might not wish to have any one else hear his story.

"Mother Deer asked him to sit by her side, and told him not to worry about his jacket, for Hazel

followed, and gave him the note Mother Deer had written.

"The master read the note and then said, 'Well, youngster, you have told me a straight story, and if you will show me the nest, I will call it even for the broken egg.'

"'I should not wonder,' he added, 'if it proved fortunate all round, after all. Mrs. Deer seems to think there is something in you besides mischief and thieving, and she says she would like to have you come and live with her, to work about the cottage, and go to school.'

"Rab did not know what to say except 'Thank you, sir,' but he went to bed with a truly thankful heart that night.

"A few days later Rab went to the Deer Cottage to live, and the two good fairies, who had helped him out of his trouble, made his new home so happy, for the next few years, that he grew to be a very different Bunny from the harum-scarum Rab of the Poor Farm."

"Is that all?" asked Brownny. Cousin Jack did not reply, but Cuddledown looked over to Bunnyboy and asked, "What do you think about 'real fairies' now?"

Bunnyboy answered, "I should like to know what became of Hazel Fawn."

"I thought so," said Cuddledown, "for you are always liking some one who is not your sister."

Bunnyboy blushed but said nothing, and Pink-eyes, who had sat quietly while the others asked questions, turned to Cousin Jack and said, "I think I know what you mean by calling Hazel and Mother Deer 'good fairies.' You mean that we can all be good fairies to others who are unfortunate or in any kind of trouble, if we try to be gentle and patient and helpful when we have a chance."

Cousin Jack nudged Brownny, and slyly asked, "Who said Pinkeyes was no fairy at all? If it takes a rogue to find out a rogue, surely a fairy is the best one to find out another fairy, and Pink-eyes is right."

Then, turning to Pinkeyes, he said, "That is just what the story means, if it means anything."

Brownny fidgeted a minute, and then asked Cousin Jack, "How did you find out all about this Rab? Did you ever know such a Bunny?"

"That is a secret," said Cousin Jack, "which perhaps I will tell you some other time. All I will say now is that Mother Deer and Hazel Fawn were not the only 'good fairies' who came into Rab's life to brighten and gladden his other dark days—just as this sunshine has come to cheer us, while I have been telling his story to you."

And, indeed, the dark clouds had rolled away and the sun was shining again, and the Bunnies forgot the disappointment of the morning in making new plans for a chestnutting party for another day.



## A PAGE OF BOATS.

(See picture opposite.)

- |                            |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Dredge-boat.            | 11. Steam Barge.              |
| 2. Cruiser.                | 12. Ohio River Stern-wheeler. |
| 3. Day-boat on the Hudson. | 13. Mississippi Steamer.      |
| 4. Sound Steamer.          | 14. Lake Steamer.             |
| 5. Iron-clad.              | 15. New York Ferryboat.       |
| 6. Revenue Steamer.        | 16. Western Ferryboat.        |
| 7. Towing on the Hudson.   | 17. Abroad.                   |
| 8. An Atlantic "Liner."    | 18. Ocean-going Tug.          |
| 9. Steam Yacht.            | 19. Lake Propeller.           |
| 10. Coast-going Steamer.   | 20. Towing on the Ohio.       |
| 21. Torpedo-boat           |                               |